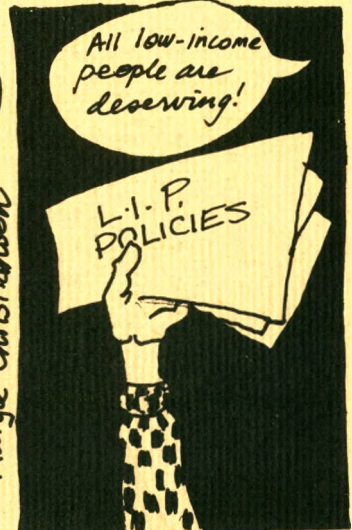
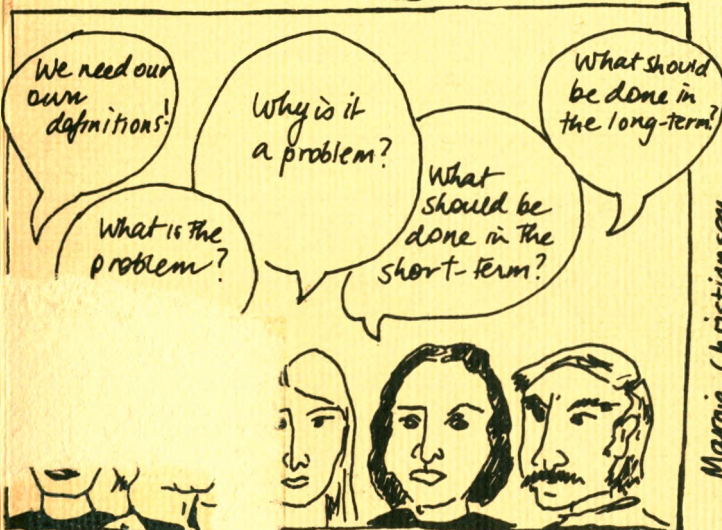
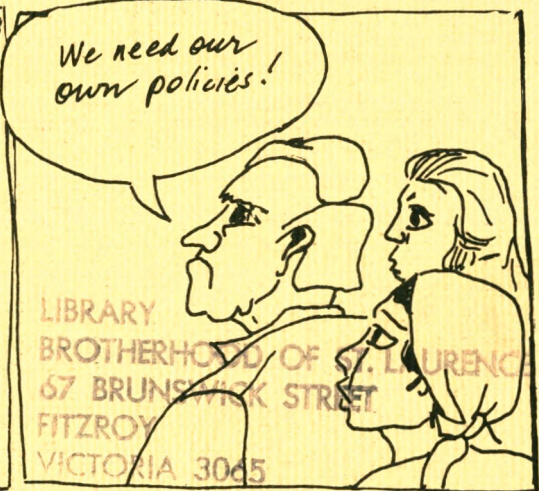


# NO.2 THE L.I.P. POLICIES

L.I.P. PERSPECTIVES SERIES



The LIP Policies

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## LIP PERSPECTIVES

### PUBLISHED

- No 1: THE LOW INCOME PERSON'S SURVIVAL KIT
- No 2: THE LOW INCOME PEOPLE'S POLICIES
- No 3: THE LOW INCOME PEOPLE'S CAMPAIGN

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# THE L.I.P. POLICIES

The L.I.P. policies.



203-83

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# INTRODUCTION

This is ARC's first policy booklet.

The booklet was first proposed in November 1978 when a series of tentative policies were adopted. When the Social Policy Worker commenced duties in March 1979 work on the policies was able to proceed.

We believe the end result justifies the delay. While the policies aren't perfect, they do represent a substantial step forward for ARC.

Following this introduction is a statement prepared by the Social Policy Worker which discusses the significance of the policies and provides an account of the processes that were involved in arriving at the policies. The comments serve only to clarify the policy making process and are not essential to the reading of the policies.

ARC would like to emphasise that it takes these policies very seriously. They are our attempt to be constructive about social change. Your comments and criticisms on the policies would be appreciated.

Judy Cassar,  
Social Action Worker.

# THE POLICY CONTEXT





5 While ARC has the opportunity to speak with many groups and is represented on many decision-making bodies such as Shelter, the National Consultative Council on Social Welfare, the Victorian Council of Social Service and the Australian Council of Social Service, it has not been able to take full advantage of these opportunities. Instead, it has been able to respond in a reactive way to the views and proposals of others and it has successfully modified the perceptions, attitudes and actions of professionals, public servants and reformers. ARC has not, however, been able to substantially change and redirect policy.

The explanation for this has been seen to lie in the absence of alternative policies which explicitly detail the views that ARC represents. Old policies remain and persist until viable alternative policies emerge to challenge and replace the old policies. Old policies are called new policies in an attempt to prove that policy makers are responsive. Without these alternative policies, ARC has not been able to adequately assess the impact of its view and whether or not new policies are really new policies. The challenging rebuttal to ARC has been that it should develop its views and produce its own alternative policies.

It was decided therefore by ARC to employ a Social Policy Worker, with professional experience in policy development, who would help develop a range of policies that articulated and reflected ARC's views. In theory, the policy development process involved several stages.

- . Policy was initially developed by the Social Policy Worker with a specific worker or member.
- . The Social Policy Worker prepared a draft for typing and copying.
- . The typed and copied draft was given to the specific worker/member and through CRASAC or the Social Action Worker given to other staff and members.
- . A meeting was held with a group of staff and members to go through the individual policies.
- . All policies were to be submitted to an ARC conference for debate, adoption, rejection and modification.
- . Eventual formal adoption of the policies by CRASAC and the ARC Council.



In practice this process has been distorted by the need to present some policies to various groups and politicians. The policies were presented as drafts -subject to development, evolution and change. In October 1979 most of the policies were previously circulated, presented and adopted at an ARC Social Change Conference - Housing, Emergency Aid, Welfare Agencies, an Indigenous Workers program, the Law, Employment and Unemployment, the Media, Income Security and Fuel. A health policy draft was first introduced and adopted at the conference. The education, youth and consumer rights and credit policies were developed subsequent to the conference.

Most of the policies are in four parts - what is the problem, why is it a problem, short-term recommendations and long-term recommendations. The policies reflect:

- an impatience for action;
- a preference for explicitness rather than implicitness;
- simple and direct statements of opinion;
- the awareness that the policy and decision makers are middle class;
- the awareness that low income people are effectively excluded from the policy and decision making process;
- the assumption that low income people should and could define their own policy needs;
- the assumption that all low income people are deserving;
- the need for low income people to act for themselves;
- the isolation of low income people from both the working and middle classes;
- the recognition that there are vested objections and interests;
- the belief that the short-term needs to be both separated and linked with the long-term.

The policies do not attempt to analyse conflicting choices, priorities and options. Their failure to look for technical, rational and bureaucratic solutions is possibly their success. The policies do not pretend to attain objective and rational solutions to the problems posed. They are aimed at converting public opinion but not compromising with public opinion. The issue is what should be done and not whether it could be done. In these policies a group of low income people have stated what they think should be done. It would be mischievous of the experts, the bureaucrats and the politicians to argue that any of the policies are impractical because they do not show how the policies could be implemented. Indeed, such a response is ideologically rather than practically based.

It could be said, for example, that many of the policies require an increase in public expenditure. This would be opposed as inflationary and as impeding restoring the confidence and profitability of the private sector. But, there is neither a natural size for the public sector or a natural level for public expenditure. What is natural is determined by cultural, psychological, political and economic factors rather than a self-evident natural given. In response to the proposal for indigenous workers, it could be said that professional and indigenous workers should be seen as having different abilities of a different kind. This is the same as saying that every worker is worthwhile but that some are more worthwhile than others and therefore that is why they are paid more. Finally, it could also be argued that the criticism that is made of welfare agencies could jeopardise their support for low income people. But, then, welfare agencies derive their power and income from helping low income people. A real alliance between low income people and welfare agencies can only exist when low income people are no longer economically and politically subservient to welfare agencies.

Explicitly, ARC recognises that the particular problems of the particular policies are not in the particular impracticalities of the policies but rather in the political and economic resistance of the decision makers and vested interests to implement the policies. It could be said that some of the views expressed in the ARC policies are unrealistic because they ignore the complexities involved in policy making and implementation and the variables that affect this process such as administrative, economic and political feasibility. As victims of these complexities and variables, why should low income people make any concessions to individual and

institutional norms that create and perpetuate poverty 9  
and inequality?

ARC's policies can be more rightfully compared with the policy deliberations and decisions of trade unions and political parties than with those of the bureaucracies and welfare agencies. The present emphasis of the policies then, is political rather than bureaucratic. It is anticipated that the policies will be regularly reviewed. The advantages of regular reviews are that:

- a. *Circumstances change and therefore policy needs to change.*
- b. *People's perceptions and attitudes change and therefore policy needs to change.*
- c. *Different people may require different policies.*
- d. *It emphasises the opportunity to re-think, re-examine, re-affirm or change existing policy.*

The policies have a particular theoretical and ideological significance. In order for any group of people to understand and control their environment, it is necessary for them to define their own environment in their own way, in their own terms and in their own words. ARC recognises that its own definition of issues is critical to ARC's own conceptual and political development. This recognition is both implicit and explicit. It is imperative for ARC to define its own agenda for debate rather than to simply participate in debates and decisions structured by others.

The right to define is economically and politically determined. The policies in this booklet clearly state how low income people are excluded from the welfare, employment, health, education and communication systems. The consequence of this exclusion is that low income people do not have the right to make the rules for these systems. It is others who determine who are included and excluded and how they are included and excluded. In brief, low income people do not have the right to define. This LIP Policy booklet is the beginning of this defining process. Two other ARC publications, the LIP's Survival Kit and the LIP Campaign, are continuing this process.

Although the policy making process in ARC is democratic,

10 it is important to recognise the limitations of this process. A minority of the staff and membership have been involved in writing, deliberating and deciding the policies. It is valid, therefore, to query the representativeness of the policies. But, then, the same queries could be raised about the policies of the Brotherhood of Saint Laurence. At least, in theory and practice the opportunity to be involved in policy making is more extensive at ARC than it is at the Brotherhood. What is valid and relevant about ARC's policies is the fact that a group of low income people have prepared their own policies. While there may be criticism of the ideas and the quality of the policies, there can be no disagreement that the perspective of low income people on policy issues is an overdue and needed corrective to the middle class perspectives that have dominated policy making within Government, the public service and welfare agencies. Quite obviously, there are areas of agreement and disagreement between low income and high income people. The ARC policies provide a basis for identifying and understanding these agreements and disagreements.

It is difficult to politically categorise the ARC policies and this is because they are not politically coherent, logical and integrated. The explanation of this is that the organisation does not have a developed theory of social change. But, then, this weakness is also a strength. Ideological innocence is seductively honest and convincing because it is not based on dogma and dogmatism.

Alongside the policy development work at ARC, there has also been a Social Change Workshop and a Social Change Conference. Both have attempted to provide an initial broad ideological and organisational context for social policy and social action.

Policies do not exist in a vacuum and contain social change assumptions and expectations. The clearer ARC is about social change, the clearer will be the policies.

It is assumed that basic to social policy and social action is the development of a theory of change. There is neither a simple way nor a short way to develop a theory of change. In brief, a theory of change is an understanding of how society operates, how it changes and how it is possible to affect these changes. Thus, any theory of change involves consideration of:

*The nature of human beings.*

- The nature and sources of power.
- The analysis of the causes of social problems.
- The role of individuals.
- The role of institutions.
- A vision of what should be.
- The actual mechanisms for change.
- The potential mechanisms for change. \*

In time this broader analytical work may enable different and more 'sophisticated' analysis and policies. Eventually ARC may be forced to choose its ideology. At present, it is unable and unwilling to do so.

The policies will retain their usefulness and validity irrespective of ARC's organisational future. It is important, therefore, to see the policies as statements in their own right. At the same time, it is also necessary to recognise that the policy statements would never have been made without the existence of ARC. While the statements have their own independent status, they have emerged out of the history of ARC and could develop with the organisation. In the meantime, the further value of the policies will depend on what use the ARC staff and members make of the policies.

David Griffiths

GRIFFITHS, David

Making Haste Slowly

(Uncorrected draft copy)

Social Policy Worker, David Griffiths reflects on ARC's social policy and social action, October 1979.

Unpublished.

# CONSUMER RIGHTS AND CREDIT

## WHAT IS THE PROBLEM?

The financial problems of low income people are very real. Finance companies work only for the people in the community who have enough money not to worry about the interest rates. Bankcards and other credit cards are only geared for some people, but not for all, because of the criteria needed to obtain and repay it.

Very few groups in the community provide adequate credit facilities for low income people.

Low income people are often forced to buy new furniture because they do not have the cash for second-hand furniture. They are given credit for new furniture, however, the interest rates are very high and there are panalties for late repayments. Salespeople are often pushy and demanding. They are anxious that customers don't check other stores prices. They are also usually on a commission and each sale increases their income.

## WHY IS IT A PROBLEM?

Low income people just don't have enough money and are always being forced to decide which bill to pay and which necessity to forgo. There is not enough money for necessities such as adequate food, clothing, housing and fuel bills. Credit is a necessity if low income people are to survive and cope.

Society doesn't trust low income people because of their difficulties in coping and consequently pays them an inadequate income. A low income in turn makes it even harder for low income people to cope.

ARC is trying to help all people in financial difficulties to understand the implications of signing papers that they don't understand. We help to get the information on credit and we provide credit facilities. The policy is to inform people of their rights - educate consumers and providers of services.

The ARC experience is that given favourable conditions <sup>13</sup>  
low income people behave as responsibly as any other  
section of the community. We have also, through  
adequate information provision, increased people's  
confidence in using other community services.

#### THE LONG-TERM

1. Basic household goods should be able to be brought on recommended retail price on credit and have a sensitive and flexible means of repayment.
2. In situations where low income people get into financial difficulties with credit, payment should be renegotiable at a reasonable cost and at no interest.
3. Credit Unions should be accessible to all members of the Community and should provide budgeting services and advice. Loans should be more accessible to low income people than is the case now.



4. Customers wanting to buy on credit should pay a third of the total cost before receiving goods on credit.
5. Debtors shouldn't be victimised and should be assessed on individual merits.
6. Other members of a debtors family should not be discriminated against because a member of the family being classified as a high risk or bad debtor.
- There should be a community education program on consumer rights and credit. Companies who are selling goods and the Government should equally fund the program. The program should begin at primary schools at fourth grade level.

#### THE SHORT-TERM

- People should be informed of their rights and those who get into debt should not be dealt with by the Magistrates Court but should have the opportunity to seek further assistance from someone of their own choice from an approved body.

All contracts should be in a language that people understand.

Small writing on contracts should be abolished and all contracts should be put on contrasting paper.

Customers should be fully informed of their rights

- a) of interest rates and how they effect the purchase,
- b) all amounts, including interest rates and purchase price, should be shown in the full amount to be repaid, and c) clearly explained to the buyer before the contract is signed.

When legal fees are incurred these should not be added to contracts but should be paid separately at no interest. Legal costs incurred should be clearly itemised to show exactly what they are for.

6. Community groups should be encouraged to set up their own savings and loan projects to provide no interest loans to low income people.

# EDUCATION



## WHAT IS THE PROBLEM?

Financial cutbacks to education are regularly occurring. Funding cuts of millions of dollars are being carried out with a disregard for real needs. These cutbacks affect school buildings, fire replacements and the elimination of portable buildings. Funding restraints also drastically affect pre-school education, allowances paid to tertiary students, salaries and numbers of teachers employed, staffing and general functioning of teachers' colleges and universities. Given that many schools in working class suburbs consist of draughty, cold and unsatisfactory (health hazard) buildings it seems that low income and working class children will have to wait in line behind schools in middle class and high income areas.

Rationalisation is often used as a cover up for straight out cut-backs.

## WHY IS IT A PROBLEM?

These economic attacks on education seem to pass almost unchallenged by most people - why? We believe it is because of the long-standing campaign being waged to discredit positive education.

The current debate over literacy and numeracy is no accident. No one denies that all people must be able to read and write. Everybody in our society needs to be literate and numerate. To be otherwise is to be powerless. In fact it is, as believed, precisely because of the "advanced" technological nature of our society that illiteracy becomes obvious.

There has always been a small group of people who end up as functionally illiterate. In the past these people have been absorbed into the workforce in unskilled jobs. However, today these jobs have either disappeared or are very rare (even bad jobs are hard to get).

The overall effect of this is to soften up the general public into accepting economic cutbacks on

education - economic restraints that are being applied at the very same time that education is being asked to do more.

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Unfortunately, the education system reflects the values of society that there are deserving and undeserving people. Middle class children are regarded as deserving. Low income children are regarded as undeserving.

The education system has become too big an institution and doesn't meet the needs of low income people. Teaching is mostly done by middle class teachers in a middle class way which does not meet the needs of low income people. Low income people should be treated as equally as everyone else and not be told "You're no good". Children from low income families are stigmatised by the majority of teachers. Teachers and schools seem to adopt the view that it is a waste of time teaching low income children, "Why bother. They are only truckies' kids and come from the flats! So, they aren't going to amount to anything at any rate."

Contrary to the accepted view that education is free, without money low income children are discriminated against. Low income children cannot afford levy fees, excursions, uniforms and interstate trips.

There are two types of schools and staffing in the education system at present. There is the type where the teachers wish for a working relationship with their pupils and their pupils' parents. These teachers are usually dedicated people who care about what happens to their pupils. The other type see their jobs as collecting their pay, they don't particularly care what happens to the children placed in their care and they do not wish to cooperate with parents. Nine times out of ten it is the low income families and their children who attend the second type of school where children are left to their own devices and are expected to get on in the best way they can.

The education system is being blamed for unemployment. This diverts public attention from the real causes of unemployment.

## 18 THE LONG-TERM

1. Education is a right. It is the responsibility of the government to see that a good education system is available to everyone and not just for those who are rich.
2. Free access to education for all including fee abolition, the cost of books and transport allowances. Everyone should be given the opportunity to go through the education system if the child is able to do so without being penalised by lack of finance.
3. Better training of teachers so that more understanding and caring towards the needs of low income people.

## THE SHORT-TERM

1. Free education for all low income people including fee abolition, the cost of books and transport allowances.
2. Linkages between neighbourhood centres and educational institutes should be developed.
3. Neighbourhood centres should be funded and strengthened by the Government.
4. Funding should be available for the empowerment of indigenous workers to assist in the running of and setting up of community courses where there is special knowledge of local needs.

# EMERGENCY AID

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The issue of emergency aid is of vital concern to low income people as receivers of such aid. Existing provisions for emergency aid are insufficient. Too little is available for too many people over too long a period of time.

The ACROSS-Department of Social Security Emergency Relief Study has demonstrated the need for the introduction of a guaranteed income as well as an emergency aid system. In the meantime, existing pension and benefit payments should be increased to above the poverty line and a nationally funded and comprehensive emergency aid system should be introduced. The ACROSS-Department of Social Security study revealed that a minimum annual amount of \$10 million was being spent of emergency aid throughout Australia. The Commonwealth Government is providing a token \$500,000 for a national scheme.

Equally as important as the amount of emergency aid funds are the conditions under which these funds are available:

1. Emergency aid is a Commonwealth Government responsibility. The Government is putting this responsibility onto the voluntary agencies.
2. The development of adequate rules is essential for any emergency aid system. It is important, therefore, that existing receivers of emergency aid are involved in the preparation of rules. This can be done through their involvement in the National Task Force, ACROSS and the State COSS'. The Government and the voluntary agencies should involve receivers and not presume to speak on their behalf. Rules at present being formulated have not significantly involved receivers in their formulation.

Attached to this document are ARC's draft rules for emergency aid, prepared by receivers of emergency aid.

3. ARC favours direct cash assistance to receivers and opposes vouchers as stigmatising and degrading for receivers. Emergency aid funds for voluntary agencies should be for cash



4. Much of the existing emergency aid provision is directed at families. At present it is very difficult for single and young people to receive emergency aid. Single and young people are entitled to emergency aid as much as families.
5. While there has been proper emphasis on the need for emergency relief agencies to be accountable to Government, there has been little consideration given to the need for agencies to be accountable to receivers. Appropriate accountability procedures to receivers will need to be included within any emergency aid system.

Receivers have a right, for instance, to a copy of emergency aid rules. Furthermore, accountability procedures to receivers will need to be simple rather than confusing.

There is a danger that research exercises for collection of information are called accountability measures. It is recognised that there is value in collecting statistics, but not as an end in itself.

6. It is not accepted that the Government and welfare agencies are the best authorities to decide on policy and the administration of existing income security provisions. While the Government is in a unique position to indicate the administrative choices, its perspective is not that of those seeking and obtaining assistance. Receivers are in the best position to know how the administrative system works. Receivers of emergency aid have a right to be involved in the policy-making and administration of emergency aid.
7. ARC believes that an emergency aid system should be available to all. ARC does not agree that there should be pilot projects. Pilot projects would only demonstrate what is already known. The need for emergency aid has been clearly established. To be available to all the level of funding should be equal to the need - \$10 million and not \$500,000.

- 22 8. Emergency aid provision should be based entirely on receivers self-defined need. Emergency aid agencies are in no position to determine when people are in need and how much and how often they should be assisted. The receivers should determine their own need subject to the rules.
9. ARC believes that emergency aid should be available 24 hours a day because crisis situations don't just occur between 9.00 a.m. and 5.00 p.m. during the week.
10. It is believed that aid is best made available through self-help groups, community groups and voluntary agencies. These groups and agencies would have to meet suitable rules, as attached to this Policy, before they were accepted as recipients of Government emergency aid funds. Agencies who refused to adopt the rules or breached these rules would no longer be funded. Funded agencies should also be required to provide audited statements of their use of grants.

Furthermore, funding should not be based on a reimbursement and matching system. This would discriminate in favour of the voluntary agencies and against self-help and community groups.

### WHY IS IT A PROBLEM?

There is a lingering, old-fashioned view that low income people are not to be trusted and this accusation has justified food vouchers and rehabilitation exercises by the Government and voluntary agencies. At best, the Government and the voluntary agencies have chosen to trust some low income people (e.g. families) and not others (e.g. individuals).

Low income people who require emergency aid can be treated with considerable suspicion for not being able to cope with their pension or benefit. The suspicion can increase with the number of requests for aid. But, then, when things like food vouchers are used the agency can ensure that aid given is being used as intended.

1. While ARC supports the establishment of a nationally funded emergency aid program, it is concerned that the introduction of such a program would be an excuse for delaying fundamental changes to the income security system and the introduction of a guaranteed income. All emergency aid agencies should committ themselves to campaigning for a guaranteed income.
2. The Government and all emergency aid agencies should adopt ARC's emergency aid rules.
3. All emergency aid agencies should campaign against the level of emergency aid funding being provided by the Commonwealth Government.
4. The Commonwealth Government should increase its contribution for emergency aid from \$500,000 to \$10 million.
5. Emergency aid should be available 24 hours a day.
6. Receivers should be involved in emergency aid policy-making and administration.

## THE SHORT-TERM

1. All emergency aid agencies should apply for grants under the Commonwealth Government's Emergency Relief Program.
2. Food Vouchers should not be defined as emergency cash relief and should, therefore, be deemed as ineligible for a grant.
3. All emergency aid agencies should argue for the need to be accountable to receivers of aid.
4. All emergency aid agencies should agree that self-help and community groups should be eligible for grants and that these grants should not be available on a reimbursement and matching basis.

## EMERGENCY AID RULES

1. Assistance will be in cash.
2. Assistance will be equally available to all people seeking assistance.
3. Assistance will be available on request.
4. Receivers will determine their own needs subject to these rules.
5. Aid will be available on the day of application.
6. These rules will be made available to receivers and will be freely available to the general community.
7. Information required from receivers will be minimised and confidential.

# EMPLOYMENT AND UNEMPLOYMENT



## 28 SHORT-TERM

1. The level of unemployment benefit should be raised to 20% above the poverty line and automatically indexed to quarterly CPI.
2. There should be a supplementary assistance for travelling and clothing expenses for the unemployed.
3. The pensioners rent assistance and PHB cards should also be available to unemployment beneficiaries.
4. Government and employers must cease the dole-bludgers campaign. Instead, Government money should be spent on an Unemployment Education and Community Relations campaign and the unemployed should be active participants in this campaign.
5. Unemployment benefit payments should be standardised and paid uniformly to all unemployed regardless of age, marital status, etc.
6. Unemployment benefit should be paid regularly and guaranteed.
7. The education system should be made more relevant and accountable to the needs of low income people.
8. Low income teenagers should receive payments similar to TEAS to continue at school from the school leaving age until they are 18.
9. Unemployed people should have the right to reject jobs on the grounds that they don't offer job satisfaction, have bad physical surroundings, are health hazards or that they are "sweat labour".
10. The work test should be abolished. As long as the work test is enforced the guidelines must be simplified, made more specific and available to all people receiving unemployment benefit.
11. Training/retraining schemes must be made relevant and accessible to low income people and offer "real" employment and training opportunities. Information on these schemes must be made available to all people receiving unemployment benefit.
12. The CES should operate as a real employment/

training service for the unemployed. It should not 29  
be involved in administering the work test.

13. The Federal Government should fund an emergency aid program for all low income people including the unemployed.

## FUEL





- 32 3. Low income people should be defined as all people in receipt of pensions and benefits and all people whose incomes are below the poverty line established by the Commission of Inquiry into Poverty. While it is difficult to establish the exact number of low income people, it is possible to establish the broad groupings of people who can be seen as low income people.

## THE SHORT-TERM

In the short-term it is necessary to alleviate the situation of low income people. It is proposed, therefore, that in the short-term for all low income people:

- 50% rebate on bills;
- abolish connection and reconnection fees;
- if coin meters are requested, they will be installed at no cost to the consumer;
- gas should never be turned off;
- abolish all bond payments;
- legal action will not be undertaken;
- and, appropriate arrangements to be made for repayment over the long-term in writing and acceptable to both parties which can be reviewed at the request of the consumer.

# HEALTH

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### 34 WHAT IS THE PROBLEM?

Low income people do not have access to adequate health care because they cannot afford doctors fees and their main access to health care is through Community Health Centres and Public Hospitals. Public hospitals aren't an adequate form of health care because:

- a) *there are long waiting periods (often hours);*
- b) *you may not see the same doctor each time;*
- c) *there is no real access to long term ongoing treatment (due to overcrowding/understaffing).*

Community Health Centres are effectively receiving decreased funding and, therefore, their ability to deliver health care to low income people is decreasing.

### WHY IS IT A PROBLEM?

It is a problem because health care is not accepted as being a right. Token-service is given to health care being a right. The community is assured that low income people are not excluded from the health care system.

The reality is that high income community does not care about the health care needs of low income people because it is distracted by:

- a) *the need to fund its own escalating health care costs, and*
- b) *its own experience of the inadequacies of the health care system which are seen to be as difficult as those for the low income community.*

There is also the economic and political power of the health establishment - the pharmaceutical companies, the doctors, the medical equipment manufacturers, the large private and public hospitals - who are locked into maintaining and increasing their power and profits.

### THE LONG-TERM

Health care is a right of all people regardless of their income. Under the present system adequate health care is a luxury which is measured by a persons ability to pay. Low income people (ie., all people receiving pensions and benefits; and people who are working and receiving wages below

the poverty line; and people not in receipt of any income) should receive as a right:

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1. Free prescriptions.
2. Free hospital treatment - with a doctor of their own choice.
3. Free doctors and specialist consultation -  
- without the stigma of being either socially disadvantaged or a PHB card holder.
4. All other associated medical costs (e.g., Xrays, pathology).
5. Free dental treatment.
6. Free optometrist treatment.

#### THE SHORT TERM

The Federal Government should:

1. Improve facilities etcetra in public hospitals.
2. Ensure adequate treatment in public hospitals.
3. Shorten waiting periods for both treatment and hospital beds in public hospitals.
4. Fund Community Health Centres as a priority.

# HOUSING

## WHAT IS THE PROBLEM?

Homeless people who have to use private accommodation and rely on charitable agencies are exploited. To be a tenant is to be disadvantaged. All people have a right to adequate and decent housing and no tenant should be victimised by landlords. There are 92,500 families on Housing Commission waiting lists throughout Australia. In June 1979 there were 22,160 in Victoria. In Victoria there are an estimated 15,000 homeless young people.

Furthermore, public and private sector accommodation for low income people is inadequate - it's too small, crowded, isolated and lacking in appropriate amenities.

But, then, low income people don't have the resources to have a choice about their accommodation. The Government and Housing Commissions are adding to the problem. In 1978-79, for instance, the Housing Commission of Victoria sold 60% of its housing stock and it is still selling.

Housing policy emphasises the private rather than the public sector. As a result, there is private affluence and public squalor. In the 1979-80 budget welfare housing was further cut and borrowing possibilities increased for people in the private sector. Home savings grants have increased from \$35 million in 1977-78 to an allocated \$75.1 million for 1979-80. The Government is decreasing funding and access to funding for low income groups. The cut in the Federal Government's housing budget in 1978-79 was 25% in real terms. The cut in the 1979-80 budget will be at least 33% in real terms. In particular, the Government has failed to look after public housing - 10,900 dwellings were commenced in 1977-78 compared with 13,000 in the previous year. The emphasis on the private sector is contradicted by low income people being locked out of the private sector because of the harsh rules established by landlords and agents. Low income people don't have any purchasing power. Yet, to get access to finance people increasingly have to have a stable existence such as a good job.

LANDLORD

REAL ESTATE  
AGENT

### 38 WHAT IS WRONG WITH THE HOUSING COMMISSION OF VICTORIA?

1. Usually single low income people or couples without children cannot get flats.
2. Institutionalized: You shut the front door and you're locked in especially for youth in Youth Training Centres and small institutions when they come home at the weekend and long-term leave. Older boys on leave call it "mini-pentridge". No play and recreation facilities. "Adults feel they are in a hospital - everything white, not colourful."
3. Ghetto living: Crowded. No privacy. No choice of neighbours (criminals, etcetra). Can hear through walls (toilets flushing, doors opening and shutting). Stigma: being in a HCV flat people look down on you. Has a bad effect on children - set up by others, emotionally disturbed and survival of the fittest forces children to go along with the crowd. Anyone can use the stairs. Violence and the threat of violence affects life style.
4. Lack of facilities. No play area expecially for older children. Nothing for adults. Children have to be quiet, restricted in playing and conflicts with older people.
5. Maintenance: Inadequate. Repairs aren't carried out e.g.: washing machines over a month and a dryer out of order for nine months. Lifts are always broken down and filthy. Rent is put up on basis of maintenance (service charge over \$4 per week) yet nothing is done. People paying rent use their mops to clean other people's urine and sperm from stairways. It's a health risk to the families involved.
6. Children are put in care because the Community Welfare Services Department says you have not got adequate housing. Yet, the HCV won't let you have a flat/house without custody of your children. If you had a flat/house you could have kids home on weekend leave etcetra and work to restore the family unit.

### WHY IS IT A PROBLEM?

It is a problem because the "right" to decent and adequate housing is not guaranteed. It is not guaranteed because Governments and housing authorities

are not willing to use their powers to provide the guarantee. This is because of the ideology of private ownership and the emphasis on property rights rather than people rights. In such a situation, the forces of the market are allowed largely to determine the availability of housing. As a result there is land and property speculation - even by the Housing Commissions. In selling 60% of its housing stock the Housing Commission of Victoria is acting like any other landlord or agent. There seems to be an assumption that the deserving end up in private housing and the undeserving end up in public housing with the potentially deserving being those who are able to purchase their Commission home or move out of a Commission flat/home.

The Government is not encouraging the building industry to build housing stock. Instead, it is encouraging and permitting speculative building in both the private and public sectors. The Government should be providing good, cheap housing. It has failed morally, socially, politically and economically. Of course, the Government has failed because the community permits or feels unable to prevent or change Government policy.

Housing is also a problem because tenants are not involved in planning and decision-making. It is no longer adequate for government and the public service to receive submissions from the community and make decisions for the community. It is time for the community to be included in the planning and decision-making process.

## THE LONG-TERM

1. Eventually, public ownership should replace private ownership of housing stock. Decisions about housing should be taken away from housing authorities. All people should be involved in future planning. Tenants should have control of their own housing.
2. The orthodox way of building houses is unnecessarily expensive. It can and should be done more cheaply. Building regulations tend to be designed to suit the production and profit needs of the manufacturers. At the same time, it is necessary to ensure that rented housing should come up to a certain standard.
3. There is a need for a greater mixture of housing and change from the policy of establishing public housing in separate areas.



- 40 4. All low income people (including single people and couples without children) should have a right to Housing Commission flats.
5. The government should agree to work with tenants in investigating possibilities for alternative energy such as solar energy and wind power.
6. The government should agree to work with tenants, local councils, housing and welfare groups to establish the available housing stock in areas and ways of making such stock available.
7. There needs to be an increase of funds for housing. In 1978-79 the Commonwealth Government provision for public housing was \$382 million. For the 1979-80 financial year it will be \$382 million and it should be at least \$600 million. In 1978-79 \$4 million was allocated under the Homeless Persons Assistance Act and only \$2.8 million was spent. For the 1979-80 financial year \$506 million has been allocated and this should be increased to at least \$10 million. Furthermore, it should not be available on the basis of a matching grant. This is only a way of reducing and slowing down the expenditure of funds. In 1976 a three year plan for aged housing to cost \$225 million was commenced. For 1979-80 \$76.6 million has been allocated. A new three year plan commencing in 1979 should have provided for the expenditure of between \$400-500 million.

#### THE SHORT-TERM

These short-term policies assume the need for a combined strategy of organising and mobilising the homeless, the tenants and community groups and influencing the decision makers. Influencing the decision-makers is seen as primarily occurring through this mobilisation and organisation process.

1. Tenants should become owners of their flats and rent used as repayments. Tenants have the right to organise their own maintenance and the service charge should become part of a maintenance fund which is supervised and controlled by tenants at a local level.
2. The HCV and the CWS Department should meet together with parents and flats/houses should be provided for parents to facilitate the return of the family unit.

3. Individual flats should be set up with a paid tenant<sup>41</sup> representative worker on each block and to be responsible for organising recreation, liaise with police etcetra for youth.

Flats should also be set up for adult recreation and also manned by paid tenant representatives and with professionals used as resource people.

4. There should be immediate sound-proofing of flats.
5. For the victims of the situation direct action is necessary. Squatting of idle housing is justifiable when society refuses to meet the housing needs of the homeless. There is a danger that the public servants, the politicians and the reformers will continue to argue about how to create enough housing for the homeless while people remain homeless. Arguments in themselves will not bring about change, particularly if changes required will benefit the powerless and cost the powerful. This is why squatting is necessary to put pressure on the politicians, the public servants and the reformers.

Squatting should be undertaken by groups rather than individual victims.

Unfortunately, squatting is illegal in Australia. This compares unfavourably with the situation in Holland and the UK. In Holland squatters are recognised as genuine accommodation seekers. Squatters researched the extent of homelessness and idle housing and presented their findings to and persuaded local government to occupy idle housing until suitable accommodation is available. In 30 cities throughout Holland this policy now applies. In the UK. squatters can stay in idle housing for a limited time if they can prove they don't have access to accommodation through suitable channels.

6. Rent increases by landlords should be agreed to by Tenant union bodies and local councils before they are implemented.
7. A Bond system is totally unacceptable. Low income people, in particular, cannot raise bond money. To continue the bond system, even as an option, discriminates against low income groups. Whether a bond or insurance system however, the landlord

should not have the right to refuse a tenancy to someone who has no financial means.

8. In cases of hardship, tenants should be able to end a lease to find an alternative, suitable accomodation. ARC oppose, however, any provision that a landlord may apply for reasonable costs. In the case of low income people if a tenant is forced to end a lease because of financial problems, it is unreasonable to require them to pay costs. It is recommended that the Tribunal pay the costs.
9. ARC opposes any penalties for tenants. Low income tenants would not be able to pay the penalties whether they are \$500 or \$5000. It is considered appropriate that such penalties could be imposed on landlords.
10. ARC believes that there is a significant difference between a breach of a tenancy agreement by the tenant and a breach by a landlord. While a tenant could accidentally damage property, a landlord cannot accidentally forget to keep the repairs and maintenance of the property. Furthermore, breaches by tenants could be socially induced and therefore would need to be thoroughly investigated.
11. It should be clearly established what service and facilities a landlord in the private and public sector should be required to provide and maintain in rented premises. The following should be provided:
  - heating
  - cold water
  - hot water
  - toilet
  - stove
  - refrigerator
  - light fittings
  - floor coverings
  - quarterly carpet cleaning and when tenant vacates premises
  - fly-screens
  - laundry facilities - washing machine, dryer.
  - at least two power points in each room, including safety plugs
  - window locks
  - door locks
  - curtains or blinds

- kitchen fan
- bathroom fan
- fire extinguisher - to be checked every three months
- Noise insulation
- garage
- garden tools
- regular washing of outside and inside windows
- general fan or air-conditioner
- vegetable and plant plots
- letterboxes with good locks
- taps in front and back yards
- hose
- industrial light bulbs in all sockets -  
- working
- regular maintenance of gas and electrical appliances owned by the owner
- fences and gates in good repair

12. Landlords right to enter premises should be based on adequate notice (48 hours for repairs, re-letting, sale and 7 days for general inspections) unless the tenant agrees otherwise.
13. A tenancies tribunal should be established and consist of three persons - a chairperson, a representative for landlords, and a representative for tenants. The Residential Tenancies Tribunal should also cover Housing Commission tenants. While the chairperson would remain the same, the tenant and landlord representatives would change depending on whether or not it was a private tenancy or a housing commission tenancy. As with the Social Security Appeals Tribunal, tenants should be able to obtain the help of a lawyer to prepare a written submission for the tribunal. ARC is opposed to any requirement that a chairperson should have to have legal experience. Legal expertise should be available to the Tribunal. The Chairperson should be fully independent and not a public servant. Tenants should have the right of appeal against the Tribunal to the Minister of Consumer Affairs.
14. The Bill should be the responsibility of the Minister of Consumer Affairs.
15. Joint actions on behalf of groups of tenants should be brought before the Tribunal. It is difficult for individual tenants to buck the system and if

there is a common problem why shouldn't this be dealt with together.

16. Evening meetings of the Tribunal are essential. If daytime meetings are persisted with, individuals wages should be met by the Tribunal.
17. Tenants should have a right to a fixed term lease except when this would cause hardship to the tenants. Both tenant and landlord to draw up suitable lease that meets tenants needs. This to be approved by both tenant and landlord.
18. Stamp-duty should be abolished. It is an unnecessary burden on low income tenants.
19. Landlords should provide tenants with all relevant documents and generally tenants have a right to be fully informed - including the landlord's address and changes of landlord; rent receipts which state the period for which the payment is made; and sale of property to enable tenants to be offered suitable alternative accomodation by landlord, agent, etc.
20. Tenancy Advice Services should be run locally and open during and after office hours. These offices should be encouraged to employ and train indigenous workers.
21. Tenants need to be protected generally from being victimised in times of financial difficulties eg. being allowed to be 28 days behind in rent before landlords are entitled to take eviction proceedings.
22. The most important factor in deciding a fair rent is the kind of tenant likely to rent premises and how much such a tenant could reasonably be expected to pay in rent. The second most important is the state of repair, facilities, the size and general condition of the premises.
23. All premises should be required to comply with a Rental Housing Code. Instead of five years, however, this should be phased in over a period of 12 months and no longer than 18 months. Landlords should be able to comply with the code within this time period.
24. Tenants should be able to conduct urgent and essential repairs if the landlord is not able to

take immediate action or is not contactable. Non-45  
urgent repairs should be undertaken by the tenant  
after reasonable notice has been given to the  
landlord. In all cases tenants should have the  
right to recover all costs from the landlord.

25. While onus of proof in alleged discrimination should lie with the landlord, this would be difficult to prove or disprove.
26. Tenants should only be evicted in serious cases.
27. Tenants should be able to decorate their own flats and grow their own food.

# INCOME SECURITY

ARC is committed to the elimination of poverty. This needs to be stressed for most proposals for helping the low income community are directed towards alleviating the situation of the poor.

## WHAT IS THE PROBLEM?

The current system of categorical payments require that people prove they are old, sick, unemployed, widowed, deserted or supporting a child. The system encourages and endorses the invasion of privacy by field officers who pry into people's lives. This allows for discretionary and biased judgements to be made that discriminate against the low income community. Some people miss out on income support altogether. Others don't apply for help because of the stigma, the bureaucracy and the hassles.

A major concern for low income people is the invasion of privacy and the demeaning nature of existing income support assistance. To receive income support low income people have to expose their lives to the prying, snooping and moral judgements of public servants and private agencies and a loss of dignity and self-esteem by low income people.

## WHY IS IT A PROBLEM?

An income security system is established because it is believed that society has a responsibility to provide for those who are unable to provide for themselves. Unfortunately, there is no consensus in the community as to whether or not people are trying to provide for themselves and therefore a number of restraints are introduced to police the undeserving and keep the deserving deserving e.g., waiting periods, detailed application forms, field officers, work tests, and below poverty line payment levels. In brief, low income people are not trusted and are suspected.

This distrust of low income people is disguised by concern about the escalating cost of health and welfare programs. The community chooses to ignore the fact that the escalating cost is due to the failure of the community to provide adequate education, housing, health

I believe in a  
guaranteed income!

Guaranteed for  
the deserving!

Subject to a work  
test!

A guaranteed  
income will  
eliminate  
poverty!



W.



48 and employment opportunities for everyone. The escalating cost of unemployment benefit would cease if all the unemployed were provided with jobs. If it is argued that it is not possible to provide jobs for all of the unemployed, then, funding an unemployment benefit is the consequence. The problem is, however, that people would like to pay an unemployment benefit but they would prefer to pay less taxes and therefore increase their own disposable income.

## THE LONG-TERM

Fundamental to the elimination of poverty is the replacement of the present income security system by a guaranteed income. A guaranteed income is necessary for individuals and families to plan and to maintain a basic level of well-being at all times.

Payments should not be seen as maintaining people in poverty, but rather to ensure that every person has a standard of living that is acceptable for and by the community i.e., this basic standard should be related to a proportion of average weekly earnings, rather than ad hoc adjustments to a basically inadequate system.

A guaranteed income is a basic right of all Australians. The income should be uninterrupted so that individuals and families do not get caught by periods of no income from which they are unable to recover. Income payments would be made automatically to every adult Australian in the same manner as Family Allowance payments are made now. The only difference would be that payments would be fortnightly instead of monthly.

1. All existing pensions and benefits should be combined into one social security payment.
2. The eligibility requirements for pensions or benefits should not differ except for family size and different payments between adults and dependent children.
3. Pensions and benefits should be available on application. The waiting periods should be abolished. Applicants should, instead, be required to sign a statutory declaration. Immediate payment of pensions and benefits would make special benefit unnecessary.

4. People in the workforce and whose income is below 120% of the poverty line should be able to apply to the government to make up the difference. While this may encourage employers to underpay employees, it should also force the government to ensure that workers received adequate wages and low wage paying industries and occupations could be investigated.

## THE SHORT-TERM

1. All existing pensions and benefits should be increased to 120% of the poverty line (see appendix). This is because the Commission of Inquiry into Poverty argued that people whose incomes were below 120% of the poverty line were poor.
2. The work test on unemployment benefit should be abolished.
3. Pension and benefit fringe benefits should be the same. Allowable earnings should be the same and not different. A higher level of allowable earnings would encourage people to find work. Travel concessions should be available to all pensioners and beneficiaries. Sixteen year old beneficiaries should receive the same benefit as eighteen year old beneficiaries.
4. Legislation providing for a moratorium on all consumer contracts in the case of unemployment and sickness should be introduced by the Victorian Parliament. If people become unemployed or sick payments of all debts would be automatically suspended until they became employed or well. This would also apply to fuel debts.
5. All payments and allowances should be kept in line with the Consumer Price Index.
6. All means tests should be the same.
7. The Commonwealth Government should be responsible for funding all income payments. These include pensions, benefits, concessions, allowances, assistance and emergency aid.

## APPENDIX

POVERTY IN AUSTRALIA  
(MARCH 1979)

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PENSION/BENEFIT	PENSION LEVEL	POVERTY LEVEL*
Unemployed single person	51.45	66.60
Unemployed married couple with two children	122.20	124.90
Unemployed married couple with four children	149.20	160.70
Single parent with one child	64.70	85.30
Single parent with two children	72.20	103.50
Single retired person	53.20	53.70

\* To meet the ARC policy the pension/benefit would be increased to 120% of the poverty level. The unemployed single person should therefore receive \$79.92 instead of \$66.60.

# LAW

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## WHAT IS THE PROBLEM?

The legal system does not exist for low income people. The law discriminates against low income people in the following ways:

1. Extreme poverty is still an offence through the law of vagrancy.
2. Courts set bails and impose fines without regard to the ability of defendants to pay.
3. The law assumes that all people are and should be equally capable of protecting their own interests.
4. Certain criminal offences, such as public drunkenness, are enforced almost exclusively against low income people.
5. Low income people lack the resources to protect themselves from the full force of the law.
6. Low income people are often unaware of their rights or lack the ability and confidence to assert their rights.
7. Changes to the law are not determined by low income people.
8. Low income people are unequally represented in gaols.
9. The crimes of low income people are more visible than the crimes of the high income people.
10. Police are more likely to take action against the children of low income families than the children of the middle class.
11. Low income people have no choice about their solicitors.

## WHY IS IT A PROBLEM?

The law is created by the haves for the haves - with appropriate but grudging concessions to the have nots. The solicitors low income people often get through Legal Aid don't seem to care about or understand the situation of low income people. Sometimes people have dared to ask their solicitors questions and have been rebuked with the remark "what are you worrying about, you're getting it free." The law reflects and reinforces the power of high income people and the powerlessness of low income people. Information, resources and decision-making are monopolised by the high income groups.

Low income people have little access and no choice. Poor people have no choice and even if they were given a choice they have no experience of how to choose. Many low income people fear lawyers, courts and the police because they are controlled by high income people for high income people. For the rich and the middle class generally the access and the choice to the legal system is different. They can get good solicitors and they can choose who they want to represent them. Choice is critical for all people. Being able to decide and choose between interested and uninterested, good and bad solicitors is important. People also need sufficient understanding and access to advice that will help them to make a correct choice. When action is taken it is cosmetic, vote-catching and short-term. It is faction-action: solutions that are either not possible to fully implement or are not designed to be fully implemented.

## THE LONG TERM

1. The legal system should give all people real choice. If justice is to be done, individuals must be able to decide/choose by having access to adequate information and advice.
2. Lawyers, police, magistrates and judges need to be more socially aware and understanding of the law and why people break the law.
3. There is a need to go beyond the legal problems of people. Social crimes should be seen as symptoms of a social situation. Instead of treating symptoms, we should be treating the causes such as the denial of adequate educational opportunities, the unavailability of jobs and high density housing. People with experience and understanding of family life would be involved before cases go to court. Community groups should be encouraged to support low income people with supportive services
4. The system of training lawyers needs to be thoroughly reviewed. It should be possible, for example, to include placement work within a law degree. As with social work students, trainee lawyers would be placed in

voluntary agencies, self-help groups and community health centres.

## THE SHORT-TERM

1. The present system of Legal Aid needs to be reorganised and restructured. The guidelines of Legal Aid need to be rewritten so that they are more flexible and responsive to the situation of low income people. More finance should be made available to Legal Aid to enable a higher standard of legal representation for low income people. At present, with second rate solicitors and charity lawyers, low income people have lost their cases before they have started. Legal Aid should be granted more funds for research and evaluation. In particular, there is a need for consumer feedback.
2. There is a need for indigenous legal advocates for low income people - to act as a go between low income people and the legal system (the courts, the magistrates, the judges, the lawyers and the police). These indigenous legal advocates would work with Legal Aid, voluntary agencies, self-help groups and community health centres and have access to professional resource people. A training program should be established for indigenous legal advocates and this should be the responsibility of the Law Institute.
3. Information on legal rights, the law and court procedures should be available in a form that is easily understood by low income people. There is a need to provide kits on people's rights and legal procedures in a simple language that is free from jargon. Pamphlets, however, are not enough. Television should be used extensively to promote an understanding of the legal system. Finally, education on the legal system should begin in the primary school.
4. All people who are either questioned, arrested or held over by the police should not be the victims of police violence. At present, the legal system condones police violence. The only real solution would be to clean up the

5. Low income people should be able to choose their own independent witness who could be present at all police interviews.
6. There should be a 24 hour support program for people seeking legal assistance.
7. Transport assistance should be available to those who cannot afford it.
8. A Bail Fund should be established for those who need it but cannot afford it.
9. People should be let out on their own recognizance.
10. Alcoholics should not be criminalized but hospitalized. Police should not have to pick up alcoholics. This should be done voluntarily by members of the community through voluntary agencies.
11. Clients should have access to their own files.

The appendix to this policy describes the work of the Indigenous Legal Advocate at ARC.

## APPENDIX

### THE INDIGENOUS LEGAL WORKER AT ARC,

1. *Informs people of their rights, the law and court procedures in a language they can understand.*
2. *Puts people in contact with solicitors or barristers who are:*
  - a) *sympathetic;*
  - b) *willing to listen;*
  - c) *willing to charge a nominal, or no fee;*
  - d) *willing to transport before and after the court case and willing to call for kids and maintain contact with them after the case;*



e) willing to advise over the telephone,  
if required.

3. Liaises between people and solicitors.
4. Offers support before, during and after legal action.
5. Liaises between people and solicitors.
6. Gives evidence in court on behalf of people.
7. Talks with kids and parents to help them understand and work out their differences.
8. Speaks with other members of family to get sympathetic understanding of the environment the problem has arisen in. Often it is found that the family has other problems, that the problem is not necessarily legal and that it can be helped by other means.
9. Gives non-legal advice over the telephone.
10. Provides a 24 hour service.
11. Liaises with JP's to get kids out of gaol on workers recognizance.
12. Gives advice and negotiates on consumer issues and liaises between debtors and credit companies.
13. Speaks with professionals and students to share skills and experiences and also to gain more knowledge to pass on.

# MEDIA

57



## 58 WHAT IS THE PROBLEM?

The general problem is that access to the media is limited by the owners and employees of the media. It is the owners and employees who decide the what, who and how of publishing and broadcasting.

Specifically, low income people are effectively excluded from the media. Appendix A to this report cites examples of how the media has exploited low income people at ARC.

In essence, low income people are regarded as suitable examples of poverty. The typical request from a television station is for a low income person who will discuss what it is like to be poor and how a particular policy or situation is affecting them personally. Similarly, authors of books on poverty like to use case studies of low income people to illustrate their arguments.

Low income people are not expected to have views and ideas about or outside of their own personal situation. The assumption seems to be that because people are low income their views on the causes of and solutions to poverty are irrelevant and meaningless. For views on causes and solutions the media invariably consult the experts from organisations such as the Victorian Council of Social Service, the Australian Council of Social Service, the Brotherhood of St. Laurence and the Institute of Social and Applied Economic Research. Thus the news value of low income people is limited to their novelty value.

## WHY IS IT A PROBLEM?

The problem occurs because of the following related factors:

1. **Historical:** Low income people have been published and broadcast as victims (victims of poverty, unemployment, earthquakes, fires and floods) as aggressors (aggressors in crime, riots, rebellions and revolutions) and as deviants (bludgers, criminals and workshy).
2. **Personalities:** The media is interested in personalising news events and issues. It is easier to personalise the poverty issue by

discussing the experience of being poor than it is 59  
to personalise the explanations of the poor for  
poverty. Furthermore, the media creates and uses  
predominantly middle class spokespersons who  
reflect and reinforce the middle class values of  
the media.

3. **Influentials:** The news values of particular individuals and groups depends on who they are rather than what they say. Low income individuals and groups are seen to be interesting but not influential. This reflects the power structure of society which denies low income people the opportunity to be influential.
4. **Conflict:** When individuals and groups are neither "personalities" or "influentials" they are expected to prove and demonstrate their newsworthiness. This is why ARC's anti-poverty vigil, the demonstrations in the Gas and Fuel Corporation's showroom and at the National Youth Conference received publicity. The problem with such demonstrations is that they need to escalate to retain their newsworthiness.

#### THE LONG-TERM

1. Low income people need to understand the media for what it is and how by power over information, resources and decision-making the media exclude low income people. (Appendix B).
2. Low income people need to develop appropriate skills for dealing with the media. (Appendix C).
3. Low income people need to educate the media about the media. The assumptions and values of the media need to change.

#### THE SHORT-TERM

There is a need to decide when to cooperate and when not to cooperate with the media. The wrong kind of cooperation could effectively undermine ARC's basic principles and make the attainment of those principles even more difficult. The right kind of cooperation could serve ARC's principles and help the process of educating the media. In particular, it is necessary to:

- 60
1. Cooperate with sympathetic magazines, newspapers, television and radio stations.
  2. Cooperate with sympathetic journalists whether or not their magazines, newspapers, television and radio stations are sympathetic or unsympathetic.
  3. Use spokespersons who are able to withstand and cope with unsympathetic journalists and unsympathetic magazines, newspapers, radio and television stations.

## APPENDIX A

### EXAMPLES OF HOW THE MEDIA HAS EXPLOITED ARC.

1. A news conference was held with a journalist from the Age. The conference had been initiated by ARC and the issue under discussion was security and the Housing Commission. While the ARC speakers were willing to speak about the nature of the security problem, they also wished to stress that the security problem was caused by the Government and the Housing Commission and that an important need was for tenant management of estates. The journalist wanted to focus exclusively on the security problem and either did not or could not understand the relevance of why there was a security problem and what could be done about the problem. The journalist, therefore, wanted to focus on consequences instead of causes and solutions. Subsequently, no story was published.
2. The current affairs television program, Nationwide, wanted to interview lone parents about coping as lone parents. The ARC response was that a lone parent could not be provided to talk about being a lone parent but that it was possible to provide spokespersons who were or had been lone parents and who could generalise on the situation of lone parents and talk about policy. The program makers decided that they would not proceed. The explanation was that although it was more worthwhile it would be unacceptable to the Producer of the program.

3. The current affairs television program, Nationwide, interviewed some ARC members about being poor. Two of the members were interviewed in their homes. A third at a bus stop. A majority of the questions directed at the three members concerned their personal situations. In each case the members tried to explain that poverty was not the fault of the individual but in each case the interviewer moved on to personal questions, and most of their statements made about causes were edited out of the program. The final broadcast program included two groups - low income people interviewed in their homes or at a bus stop who were used to explain what it was like being poor and two anti-poverty experts, Professor Henderson and Peter Hollingworth, interviewed in their offices and who were used to explain the why of being poor and what should be done.
  
4. The current affairs television program, Nationwide, was doing a program on the Social Security system. A LIP victim was asked questions about the activities of a field officer who had interviewed her and the kind of questions he had asked. Brotherhood of St. Laurence and Australian Council of Social Service (ACOSS) spokespersons were used to comment on the general situation. An interview had been recorded with an ARC income security worker. Unfortunately, her comments were about policy rather than the personal and she did not have the status of a Brotherhood or ACOSS representative. The program appeared without the ARC segment.

## APPENDIX B

### DETERMINING NEWS.\*

What factors determine what is news?

#### PRIMARY:

1. *The economic role of the media.*

- 62
2. The ideology of the media.
  3. The economic role of news events.
  4. The ideology of news events.

#### SECONDARY:

1. Which issues and events are selected for investigation.
2. Who is assigned to cover the story.
3. How much time is allowed for investigation of the story.
4. Who is selected to be interviewed.
5. The ability of the investigator.
6. Variations in space or time available.
7. The need to avoid sameness in content.
8. The need to balance between soft and hard news.
9. The need to preserve balance in stories/items.
10. How much time/space is allocated to the story/item.
11. The length of the story/program.
12. Assumptions/knowledge about the audience.
13. The order of presentation.
14. The surrounding stories.
15. The authorities cited.
16. The people interviewed.
17. The editorial policy.
18. The scale of the medium.
19. The location of the medium.
20. The constituency of the medium.

## USING THE MEDIA.\*

1. *Determine the news angle of what you want to say.*
2. *If you are approached for comment - comment.*
3. *Avoid propoganda.*
4. *React to relevant news stories, items and letters.*
5. *Establish contacts with journalists.*
6. *Don't threaten the media.*
7. *Don't use public relations experts.*
8. *Don't make any assumptions about journalists.*
9. *Clarify the purpose of interviews before and not after.*
10. *Familiarise yourself with the characteristice of the media.*
11. *Be brief, factual and concise.*
12. *News releases should be typed and double-spaced with wide margins.*
13. *Don't overestimate or underestimate the media.*
14. *Speak with one voice.*
15. *Use good timing.*
16. *Exploit events.*
17. *Don't expect anything.*

\* Prepared for an ARC Media Workshop by the Social Policy Worker.



# YOUTH

## WHAT IS THE PROBLEM?

The views of youth today are being rejected and pushed aside by the Government, youth organisations and the community. Youth should be given responsibility over their own lives. Instead, adults make the decisions for youth. Older people think that they can speak on behalf of youth but all they can express is what they read in books and the newspapers and what they hear on radio and television. When there is an effective consultation with youth, such as the Commonwealth Government's Youth Say project and the Youth Council of Victoria's Youth 2000, there is no follow up and implementation.

## WHY IS IT A PROBLEM?

Adults don't trust young people. They don't believe young people are capable of acting responsibly and intelligently. But, it's more than a question of trust. Adults also like the power of being able to decide for youth. Why should they give up the power to decide? After all, youth might make different decisions which the adults might disagree with.

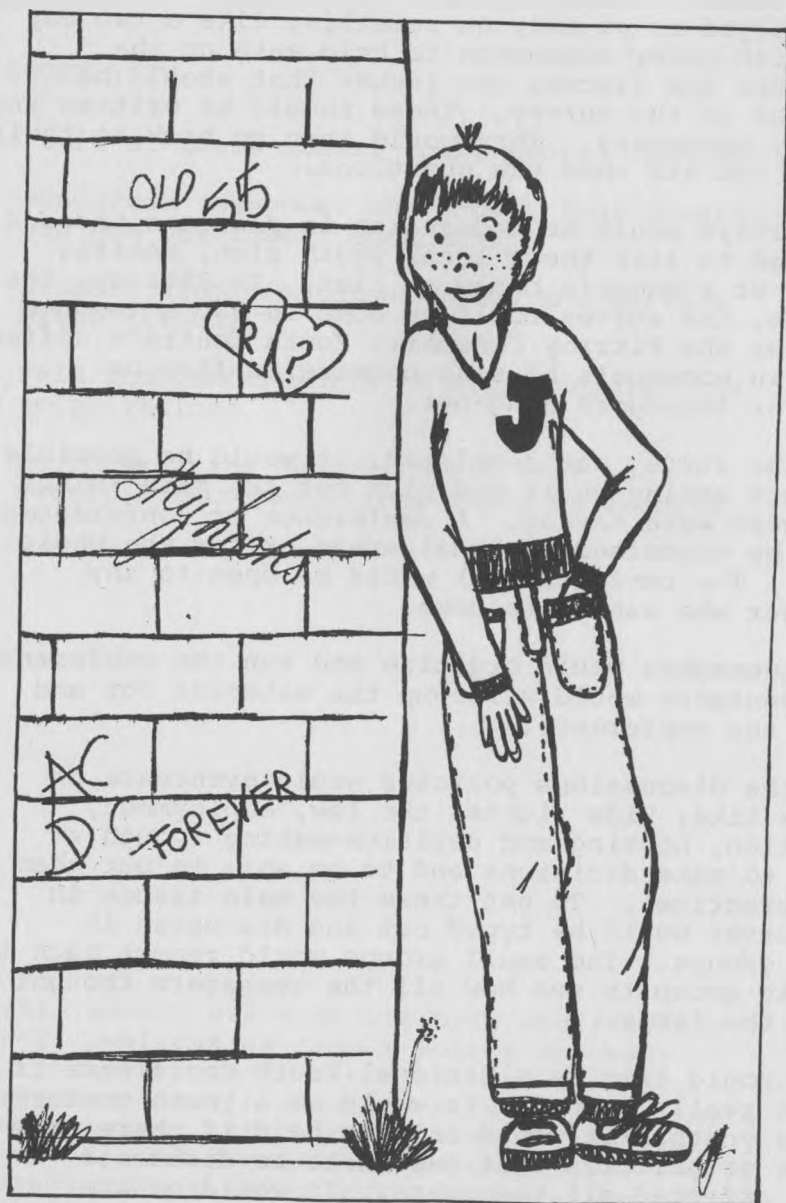
## THE LONG-TERM

A proper youth consultation should be run by young people and the decisions of this consultation should be implemented.

Young people should be allowed to decide what the issues are and not older people. Young people would organize the conference, set the agenda, make the topics and ask the questions that need to be asked.

The Government should trust young people to be able to organize their own conferences. They should give young people financial backing and help. The only condition should be that they accept that the young people would be doing their best and that the government would not interfere.

Before a young people's conference, there should be a survey of some kind like the Youth Say Project in



1974 and the Youth Council of Victoria's Youth 2000 consultations. This survey/consultation would ask young people what they needed. Teenagers could say what they thought was going on, what was wrong and what was right and have a say in what they wanted to do.

66 Unlike Youth Say and Year 2000, however, teenagers would be nominated by young people from different local areas to help organize the survey. They would be employed to go away on something like a two day camp with other teenagers to help make up the questions and discuss the issues that should be included in the survey. These should be written and done by teenagers. They would then go back to their groups and ask them the questions.

The surveys would be undertaken in places teenagers are used to like their local youth club, meeting places or someone's house or flat. In Fitzroy, for example, the survey could be done in ARC's teenage room, at the Fitzroy Community Youth Centre's coffee shop, in someone's housing commission flat or wherever teenagers hang-out.

Once the survey was completed, it would be possible to start acting on it and pick out the main things teenagers were saying. A conference or conferences would be organised in local areas or for the whole State. The conference(s) would be open to any teenager who wanted to come.

Only teenagers would organize and run the conference. The teenagers would write-up the material for and after the conference.

From the discussions policies would eventuate on things like: kids rights, the law, employment, education, housing and decision-making (youth's right to make decisions and to be able to put them into practice). To get these the main issues in the survey would be typed out and discussed in small groups. The small groups would report back to the big group to see how all the teenagers thought about the issue.

There would then be a National Youth Conference if it was really needed. It would be a youth conference run by youth. It would only be held if there were issues or policies that needed to be discussed which affected all teenagers. It would be the same as the State Conference with elected youth representatives getting financial help to go to Canberra.

Once policies were prepared the Government would be asked to support, fund and implement them.

The policies would then be implemented in local areas with youth.

## THE SHORT-TERM

In pursuit of these ideas, young people require:

1. Resources (manpower and money) from Government and non-Government agencies.
2. Support from recognised youth and welfare organisations.
3. Paid indigenous youth to help organise the consultations.
4. An undertaking by Government that the eventual recommendations would be adopted.

\* This policy has been slightly modified for this publication from a policy document prepared by ARC's teenagers and distributed at the Commonwealth Government's National Youth Conference, 1979. The following teenagers contributed towards the youth policy: Brett Hearps, Malcolm Hearps, Darlene Miller, Denis Paterson, Joe Tatnell, Adrian Halliday, Julie O'Connor, Chris Parker.

In developing the policy the teenagers were helped by Robert Hudson, Rochelle Virtue and Ray Walters.

# WELFARE AGENCIES

## WHAT IS THE PROBLEM?

Welfare agencies are dominated by middle class do-gooders, social workers and other professionals. They are people who work for and with low income people, but have not in the majority of cases been, and are not, low income people. The end result is that their programs and policies are for rather than by low income people. Many low income people withdraw themselves from these agencies because of their discrimination and lack of accountability to their clients. As for the policy making federations, the Australian Council of Social Service and the Victorian Council of Social Service, most low income people are effectively excluded. They are excluded because they cannot afford the cost of their participation, because of in-fighting, and complex jargon, meeting procedures and hidden agendas.

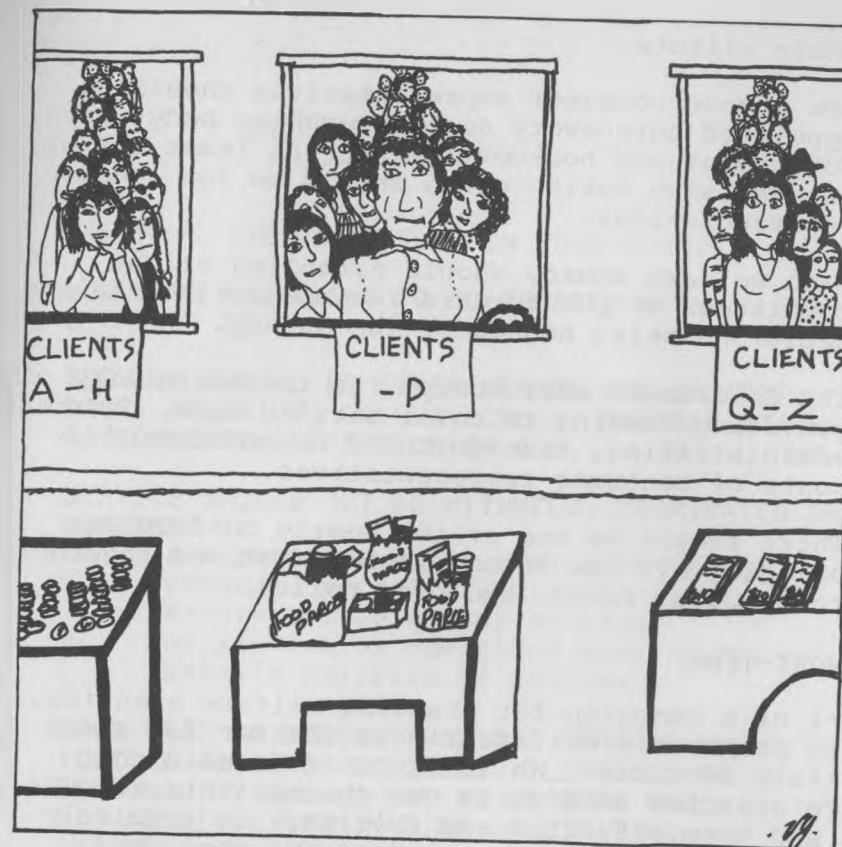
## WHY IS IT A PROBLEM?

Welfare agencies, like any other organisations in society, tend to reflect the hierarchical and bureaucratic nature of society. In excluding and controlling low income people they are no different from most organisations and institutions. The protective paternalism of welfare agencies is deliberate. First, because it is the role of welfare agencies to protect the rest of the community from the demands of the low income community and to judge who is deserving and who is undeserving. Second, because do-gooders, professionals and social workers wish to retain their power to control, dominate and decide.

## THE LONG-TERM

The long-term solution is for low income people and self-help groups to organise by helping themselves. For this to occur, the short-term solution is that low income people must be given power over relationships, decision-making, information and resources.

As indigenous workers, low income people can either



work with or instead of professional workers e.g., examples of working with are the employment of indigenous legal advocates working with lawyers and health advocates working with doctors; and examples of instead of professional workers are in the provision of emergency aid, the employment of welfare rights workers and ARC's voluntary resource workers.

But, low income people also need real opportunities to attain power. If welfare agencies are serious about giving low income people power then this seriousness must be demonstrated by practical and effective programs and commitments for the participation of low income people in decision-making. Low income people need to be adequately represented on the decision-making bodies of welfare agencies and barriers to their participation must be lifted.

- 72 10. YOU HAVE THE RIGHT NOT TO BE SUBJECTED TO RESEARCH WITHOUT YOUR EXPRESSED AND INFORMED CONSENT.
11. YOU SHOULD HAVE MAJOR REPRESENTATION IN THE AGENCY AT THE POLICY LEVEL. THE AGENCY HAS THE RESPONSIBILITY FOR ENCOURAGING THE DEVELOPMENT OF USER GROUPS WITHIN THE COMMUNITY.

# INDIGENOUS WORKERS

sure we believe in indigenous workers  
as long as we're still professional workers  
as long as they are still under us,  
as long as they are paid less than us!



## INTRODUCTION

One of the most valuable concepts of the Family Centre/Action and Resource Centre Project has been the employment of indigenous workers.

Indigenous workers are indigenous to the group they work with and for. Thus low income people are employed to work with low income people; Aborigines are employed to work with Aborigines and the handicapped are employed to work with the handicapped. An indigenous worker does not cease to be an indigenous worker on being employed and receiving an income in excess of the average income received by the peer group. In essence, the difference between indigenous workers and professional workers lies in their:

- a) *life experiences as an indigenous member of the client group,*
- b) *being a consumer of the traditional system;*
- c) *utilisation of new techniques to provide assistance e.g., jargon-free language, real self-help, providing resources based on receivers own defined need and social action based.*

While professionals also utilise new techniques, these are all ultimately aimed at controlling clients.

When the indigenous workers program was conceived it was envisaged that suitably trained indigenous workers would be able to move out into the community. One indigenous worker was in fact placed within the then Department of Social Welfare and the placement was satisfactory. Unfortunately, the Department has not subsequently opened up employment opportunities for indigenous workers. Another indigenous worker was placed in a voluntary agency. The placement failed however because the agency did not know how to use the indigenous worker. A third indigenous worker found employment with a self-help group but the job ended when funding ended. If these kind of problems are to be avoided in the



future more attention will have to be given to the context of agencies so that the agencies and their staff will be more able to use indigenous workers. At the same time indigenous workers need to be fully aware of the kind of agency in which they are being placed.

The current high unemployment situation offers limited opportunities for the unemployed to find jobs and for the employed to move from one job to another job. It is not surprising, therefore, that job prospects for indigenous workers are quite limited. Furthermore, the training opportunities originally offered to resource workers within ARC are no longer available. The original training program provided for resource workers being trained by professionals and support workers but this lapsed as a formal program with the withdrawal of most of the professionals. There is ad hoc training when professionals and support workers work alongside indigenous workers. A training scheme does exist in the Credit Union and the Savings and Loan Project. In summary the problems are to:

1. Re-establish a training program for all resource workers.
2. Find and place indigenous workers in jobs.
3. Provide initial support services for placed indigenous workers.

### BROAD OBJECTIVES

Three broad objectives for an indigenous workers program could be stated as follows:

1. Increasing meaningful employment opportunities for unskilled and semi-skilled unemployed and under-employed persons.
2. Making the human services more accessible and responsive to consumers.
3. Meeting critical personnel shortages in the human services.

A project employing indigenous workers does not of itself create external employment positions for indigenous workers.

At present, for most jobs indigenous workers are competing with formally qualified and professional workers. Employers write their job descriptions to indicate that in most cases formally qualified and professional workers will get the jobs. While employers may also emphasise the value of practical experience, they tend to prefer formally qualified workers with practical experience rather than indigenous workers.

The critical issue in creating employment is the creation of entry level positions for indigenous workers. Either the creation of specific job opportunities only for indigenous workers or acceptance that indigenous workers are as suitable for certain jobs as more formally qualified and professional workers.

The creation of real job opportunities for indigenous workers depends on the ability and willingness of employers to provide job opportunities. To do this employers need to be persuaded that the employment of indigenous workers is in their long-term interest. In summary, these are the kinds of arguments that potential employers should consider:

1. *Employment of indigenous workers would enable the reaching of clients not otherwise reached by traditional agencies. Most low income people fear authority and bureaucracy and indigenous workers would be able to put low income people openly and freely into contact with resources that would otherwise not be available to them.*
2. *Unfortunately, it is cheaper to create jobs for indigenous workers in the human services than it is to create jobs for professional workers. This is simply because professional workers receive higher wages than indigenous workers. People should not however, be paid according to whether or not they have credentials.*

3. *Indigenous workers understand the needs and aspirations of their own group and can therefore provide a more relevant and effective service delivery. Experience is more reliable than theory.*
4. *Life experiences are equivalent credentials to formal education. The experience of being low income, black or handicapped is as relevant as a formal education.*
5. *Employment of indigenous workers would enable low income people to exercise their leadership abilities. Experience has shown that, given the opportunity, indigenous workers have as many leadership abilities as professional workers.*
6. *Employment of indigenous workers would enable greater accountability to consumers. It is difficult for professionals to be accountable to consumers. Indigenous workers would be and would be expected to be more accountable to consumers.*

## PROPOSAL FOR A PROJECT AIMED AT PLACING INDIGENOUS WORKERS IN THE WORKFORCE:

### TRAINING PROGRAM:

Jobs will only become available to indigenous workers if they are sufficiently trained and they are seen to be sufficiently trained. The effectiveness of indigenous workers depends on careful selection and their subsequent training.

Traditional methods of selecting employees through letters, application forms and individual interviews are inadequate. It is, therefore, proposed that initially a pre-training and work experience program would be undertaken at ARC. This would be undertaken in the Resource Room with the resource workers. This pre-training and work experience would involve:

1. A pre-job training period of 4 weeks in which training is based on on-the-job observation of resource workers.

- 78 2. Interim appointment as a resource worker for a period of 6 weeks with one half of the day devoted to service delivery and one half to further training.

At the end of the 10 weeks the situation of the pre-trainee would be reviewed by the trainee, the resource workers and the Resource Room Co-ordinator. If accepted, the pre-trainee would be taken on as a trainee:

3. Continuous job training for four months with weekly one day group training sessions in which the resource workers discussed and evaluated their work and received formal training.
4. It is envisaged that trainees would be paid a NEAT allowance.
5. Training placements would be at ARC, welfare agencies and other relevant organisations such as schools, community health centres and community centres.

The training program would cover:

1. The role of indigenous workers.
2. Helping others to help themselves.
3. How others will see their own needs.
4. The range of human needs.
5. The community's resources and the means of access to them.
6. The knowledge, attitudes and skills required of indigenous workers.
7. How to help people.
8. How to convey to others knowledge, values and skills.
9. How to bring people to a realisation of their own resource giving potential.
10. How to relate effectively to individuals and groups.

11. How to work collaboratively.
12. Identifying the procedures to be used in solving a problem.
13. How to make a good referral of a person to another agency.

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## PLACEMENT OF INDIGENOUS WORKERS

At the conclusion of their training it would be hoped that permanent jobs would become available for trainees. It would be desirable to secure the approval and support of a group of employers who would agree to either retain or take on trainees at the end of their training. A group of employers in the Government and private sector could be approached to provide jobs.

### GOVERNMENT SECTOR:

Community Welfare Services  
Department,  
Housing Commission of  
Victoria,  
Department of Social Security,  
Commonwealth Employment  
Service,  
Australian Legal Aid Office.

### PRIVATE SECTOR:

Victorian Council of Social  
Service,  
Australian Council of Social  
Service,  
Brotherhood of St. Laurence.

## A JOB DEVELOPMENT WORKER

It has been argued that the establishment and implementation of a training program, the canvassing of jobs and support services for workers and employers will be necessary. It is recommended that this calls for the appointment of a Job Development Worker. It is important that job opportunities are opened up in advance rather than after training.

## 80 IMPLEMENTATION

1. Funding of \$16,000 is sought for the employment of a Job Development Worker over a period of 12 months.
2. The Brotherhood of Saint Laurence is asked to support the application.
3. Funding is obtained.
4. Position of Job Development Worker is advertised.
5. Job Development Worker is appointed.
6. Job Development Worker sets up and implements a training program for indigenous workers.
7. Job Development Worker canvasses select list of employers for job opportunities.
8. Job vacancies are lined up.
9. Trainees commence pre-training for 10 weeks.
10. Acceptable pre-trainees commence training for 4 months.
11. Completed trainees are retained or placed in jobs with appropriate support mechanisms established by Job Development Worker.

